



## Countering intolerance and discrimination is vital to meeting current security challenges, say participants at OSCE meeting

VIENNA 14 April 2016



(L-r): Michael Georg Link, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and Ambassador Eberhard Pohl, 2016 Chairperson of the Permanent Council, during an OSCE meeting on Countering intolerance and discrimination, Vienna, 14 April 2016. (OSCE/Micky Kroell) [Photo details](#)

VIENNA, 14 April, 2016 – Promoting tolerance and effectively countering discrimination are vital to ensuring security, and must be at the centre of policies to address current threats, participants said today at the opening of a two-day OSCE meeting in Vienna.

The meeting, organized by the OSCE's 2016 German Chairmanship and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), brought together representatives of governments and of civil society organizations working on issues related to tolerance and non-discrimination from the Organization's 57 participating States and Partners for Co-operation.

"The threats to common security in the OSCE are complex. We need multi-dimensional strategies to tackle them successfully. As part of these efforts we must

resolutely address discrimination and intolerance as these, in particular, can cause and fuel conflicts. The German OSCE Chairmanship has made the promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination a priority of its OSCE human dimension programme. Our approach is a positive one, centring on best practices and exchange of experience,” said Eberhard Pohl, Chairperson of the OSCE Permanent Council and Permanent Representative of Germany to the OSCE. “All OSCE participating States should act in concert to jointly develop and implement policies in favour of tolerance and non-discrimination. We all share the goal of sustainably strengthening the social cohesion of our societies; we can and should learn from each other on this path.”

Michael Georg Link, Director of ODIHR, expressed his hope that the meeting would help underline that promoting tolerance and non-discrimination is integral to the OSCE’s comprehensive concept of security.

“In addition to the focus on countering intolerance and discrimination, it is important that we seize this opportunity to discuss basic fundamental principles of a pluralistic society – freedom of thought, conscience, religion, expression and movement – as well as to understand how these fundamental freedoms are maintained while addressing the growing threat of terrorism and the rise of more robust security methods and policies,” Director Link said. “While discussing these inter-related themes, it is also vitally important to examine the nexus between tolerance, or the lack thereof, and security.”

In delivering the keynote address, author and journalist Gary Younge said that effectively addressing the challenges currently faced by OSCE participating States meant striking a delicate balance.

“In a moment when the threat of terrorism stalks the globe it is vital to draw clear lines relating to our freedom and security. We want to be safe; we want to be free. We must defend life; we must defend liberty,” Younge said. “Such are the challenges of the modern state in an era of globalization, terror and migration.”

The meeting will address challenges to realizing tolerance and non-discrimination, along with their root causes and consequences, the role of education and awareness-raising to prevent intolerance and discrimination including hate crimes, hate speech and hate on the Internet, as well as other tools and policies for countering these.

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